



Helias Catholic A+ Schools Program Student Handbook



Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to provide students, parents, faculty, and staff with a clear understanding of the guidelines and policies of the A+ Schools Program as established by the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993.

There are many aspects of the law which require Helias Catholic High School to establish guidelines and policies. It is the responsibility of the School Counselors to administer the A+ Schools Program in a fair and consistent manner. All A+ Students must be and will be treated fairly and equitably.

The first step of participation in the A+ Schools Program is the signing of the A+ Schools Agreement by the student and parent/guardian. After the signatures are obtained the student is considered to be an A+ Student at Helias Catholic High School. **It is then the responsibility of the student to continue to meet the requirements to be certified as an A+ Student upon graduation.**

Helias Catholic High School has a responsibility to achieve and maintain the status of an A+ School. Upon graduation, the A+ Coordinator must certify to the State of Missouri the students who have achieved this status and are eligible for the financial incentives of the program. Some students will not be able to meet the requirements set forth in the A+ Schools Program. The A+ Schools Coordinator will notify the student(s) and parents if the student is not eligible for the A+ Schools status.

Any questions about this manual or the A+ Schools Program should be directed to the students School Counselor.

Benefits of an A+ School for Students

Qualifying graduating students will be eligible for the following:

- Tuition to attend any Missouri public community college or public vocational or technical school.
- Tuition incentives which will be made available after the student has made a good faith effort to first secure all available federal, post secondary, financial assistance funds which do not require repayment.

Students will receive this incentive for TWO years. A student must be considered a FULL-TIME student by the post-secondary institution maintaining a grade point average of 2.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Students must complete the two years of FULL-TIME enrollment at the institution within FOUR years after graduation from Helias Catholic High School. **Tuition reimbursement is contingent upon availability of state funds.**

Student Eligibility

To be eligible for the financial incentives of the A+ Schools Program, Helias Catholic High School must certify a student has met all A+ requirements. As the official representative of the Department of Education of the State of Missouri, the School Counselors have the responsibility to certify that a graduate of Helias Catholic High School has met the criteria of certification. To be certified as an A+ Schools student, a student must:

- Sign an [A+ Student Application](#)
- Attend an A+ High School for **three years prior to graduation.**
- Graduate from Helias Catholic High School with a cumulative **grade point average of 2.5** or above on a 4.0 grading scale. (non-weighted)
- Graduate from Helias Catholic High School with a cumulative **attendance record of 95%** or better.
- Perform 50 hours of unpaid **tutoring** of younger students.
- Maintain a record of **good citizenship** and avoidance of unlawful use of alcohol and drugs.

A summary sheet advising the student and parent(s) or guardian of the student's progress toward A+ status will be mailed after each school year.

Grade Point Requirement

To meet the eligibility requirement for grade point average, the student must:

- Graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale (on a non-weighted scale). **It is the student's/parent's responsibility to be mindful of the grade point average.**
- Averaging or rounding up to the next highest grade point is not allowed.
- The cumulative grade point average is based on all four years of high school attendance.

The student's official transcript will serve as evidence of grade point average for admission into a public community college or public vocational or technical school.

Attendance Requirement

A+ Students are required to have a 95% attendance rate at the time of graduation. Any student who does not meet the 95% attendance requirement **will not** be eligible for the A+ financial incentive. The following guidelines for attendance are in effect for all students participating in the A+ Schools Program:

- Accumulative attendance record will be kept from the beginning of the freshman year until graduation.
- Accumulative attendance information will be gathered from the official computerized information system used by the district or school. **It is the student/parent's responsibility to be mindful of the cumulative attendance percentage.**
- For students who attend Nichols for part of the school day, attendance information will be obtained from Nichols and sent to the School Counselors who will add this information to Helias' records.

- At the end of every school year, A+ students and their parents or guardians will be provided information of the student's status with regard to the A+ attendance requirements.
- Rounding up of percentages is not allowed.
- **Funerals, college visits, doctor's appointments and normal illnesses are not excusable absences for the A+ program.**
- No appeals will be allowed after a student has graduated.

Attendance Appeals Guidelines

In accordance with Missouri state guidelines, a school district may have a process to review an appeal by a student to meet the A+ Schools Program guidelines. Helias Catholic High School provides such a process for a student/parent to submit a request for an appeal for denial of A+ scholarship. Attendance and Citizenship are the only A+ requirements allowed to be appealed. Appeals for reasons other than attendance must be reviewed and accepted by building A+ Appeals Committee for final approval by school administration. The procedures and due dates outlined below are established in the best interest of the student. Several state requirements mandate that names of A+ eligible student's be reported to the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) within two (2) weeks of graduation each year. The State is precluded from including names after a specified time because of state funding issues. There is no state appeal process. The State of Missouri will not address any local school issues regarding a student's A+ eligibility.

Student/Parent Responsibilities: Contact your school counselor to discuss any attendance or citizenship concerns. Review attendance updates that are provided to the parents/students on a routine basis. Review communication from the school and/or School Counselor regarding citizenship infractions. (These are provided when citizenship infractions occur.)

Criteria for Submitting an Attendance Appeal: The purpose of an appeal is to help the student meet the state requirements for A+ when extreme, unusual or extenuating situations occur, such as those listed below:

- Catastrophic illness
- Hospitalization for surgery or emergency treatment
- Chronic issues that require regular medical treatment and for which the student has a 504 accommodation on file, or for which the student could qualify for a 504 accommodation plan
- Catastrophic family crisis
- **Doctor's appointments and normal illnesses are not considered extenuating circumstances.**

A request for an appeal must be submitted to the student's school counselor by April 15th of the student's senior year. A student may discuss attendance issues with their school counselor prior to his/her senior year, but the Appeals Committee will review attendance appeals during the spring semester of the student's senior year. To be considered for an attendance appeal, the student must currently meet all other requirements of the A+ Schools Program.

Initiating an Attendance Appeal:

1. To initiate an appeal, request the Attendance Appeal in writing to the student's counselor.
2. Submit original documentation that provides detailed information, explaining and supporting the appeal. Examples of original documentation may be a letter signed by the attending physician or insurance documents. An insurance document (Explanation of Benefits (EOB) in lieu of a physician's statement) may be used to verify a period of confinement to a medical institution.
3. Assemble and submit all required documentation to the student's school counselor on or before the date of **April 15th** of the student's graduation year.

Review Process and Procedure:

1. The Appeals Committee meets and reviews each student appeal. The committee is composed of the following representatives from Helias Catholic High School:
 - Assistant Principal responsible for attendance
 - Teacher
 - Counselor
 - School Nurse
 - A+ Steering Committee Member
2. The Appeals Committee meets within two week after April 15th to review all appeals (attendance & citizenship) received from seniors. The Appeals Committee reviews only written documentation submitted. Verbal appeals will not be granted.
3. The School Counselor submits the student's documentation to the Appeals Committee. The student's name and demographic information are removed from the documentation submitted for the Committee's review.
4. The student's School Counselor has no vote in the decision on the appeal.
5. The Committee reviews a student's entire attendance as well as any file in the school nurse's office for all four (4) years, including truancies, family vacations, tardies, out-of-school suspensions, etc., to advance the committee's understanding of the appeal. Review of the entire attendance record assists the Committee in understanding the student's level of commitment to maintaining the required ninety-five (95%) attendance for the A+ Schools Program.
6. For Attendance Appeals, only absences that meet the reasons stated in the Criteria for Submitting on Attendance Appeal section will be considered as an appealable absence.
7. The student/parent is notified in writing of the Committee's decision within fifteen (15) days of the review. The student's School Counselor initiates the letter and may also personally contact the student or parent to inform him/her of the Committee's decision.

Tutoring Requirement

A+ Students are required to perform 50 hours of supervised, unpaid tutoring. The following guidelines have been established for A+ tutoring:

- Tutoring must be school sponsored, or pre-approved by the school counselor.

- [Official timesheet](#) must be kept by the student and turned in to the A+ Coordinator who will record the hours.
- Official timesheet must be signed by a school official sponsoring the tutoring.
- Tutoring may be done during the school year or during summer school.
- Any tutoring taking place outside of Helias Catholic High School premises must be supervised by a school educator.
- Tutoring cannot take place in a student's home.
- The A+ Coordinator or the sponsoring school may terminate the tutoring experience.
- The A+ Student is responsible for being present at the agreed upon day and time for the tutoring. If absent, it is the responsibility of the A+ Student to notify the adult in charge of the A+ tutoring experience.
- **Students may begin tutoring in the fall of their Freshmen year.**
- **All tutoring must be approved by the student's counselor**
- **Tutoring hours should be submitted no later than May 1st of a students' graduating year.**

Citizenship Requirements

A+ Students are required to be good citizens and must avoid the unlawful use of alcohol, vaping and drugs. Participation in the A+ Schools Program is an honor and unique privilege for Helias Catholic High School students. Any student who does not meet the citizenship requirement will not be eligible for the A+ Financial Incentive. The following guidelines for citizenship are in effect for all students participating in the A+ Program. Students who have an infraction of any nature listed below are ineligible to apply.

- A+ Students must avoid the unlawful use of alcohol, vaping and drugs.
- An A+ Student will not sell, possess or use any controlled substances as defined by law unless prescribed by a licensed physician.
 - **Suspension from School** - Any violation that results in suspension will cause a student to lose eligibility in the A+ Program.
 - **Criminal Activity** - Students who are convicted of a felony will not qualify.
 - **Substance Abuse** - Students shall not possess or use alcoholic beverages, vaping paraphernalia or controlled substances on or off campus. Any violation (possession, use, manufacture, sale or transportation) will result in loss of eligibility for the A+ program. *Note: An MIP charge (Minor In Possession), whether a student is drinking or not, will result in ineligibility.*
 - **Violations of the Safe Schools Act** - Students who are disciplined in accordance with the Safe Schools Act of 1996 will lose eligibility for the A+ Schools Program. These violations include, but are not limited to assault, weapons possession and drug distribution.

Any infraction must be reported to the A+ Coordinator the next school day.